CAIN.

by J. TOMLIN.

There must have been in Cain's bosom some instinctive principle of evil, that prompted to the commission of that vile deed, which sickens the very heart in thinking on it. He must have had a natural love of blood, to have imbued his unpractised hand with a stain that nothing could wash away! He could not have been prompted to the commission of the deed from any thing he had witnessed on the earth; for the first epoch of crime was made in the death of his brother, and the recording Annalist shuddered for the first time as he took note of it. How deeply penetrating to the heart must have been that sorrow when he saw his brother expiring in the cold dews of death—that death of which he heard so much, but of which, until now, he had known nothing. How poignant must have been his grief—how inconsolable his agony!

When the young morning arose in blushes from her eastern couch, the two brothers were at play on the banks of the Euphrates. The crystal waters gurgled along beneath their canopy of entangled vines, and the birds were carolling among their balmy branches. Nothing could have been more lovely than the sky, and nothing sweeter than the hushed silence of the hour, disturbed only by the hum of birds, and the murmur of waters. By the river's brink the brothers played, and from the glassy wave their faces were reflected. The fawn tripped lightly on the dewy grass, but stirred not the twigs beneath its feet. The brothers looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. They discoursed but little by words. Their eloquence consisted more in looks than in any thing else. They had but little knowledge. They could not have had much, for experience is the source from whence it is derived. Simple as they were, they were not less simple than they were happy. Oppression had not bound them down in iron chains, nor wreathed around them its folds of unpitying links! The sorrows of years had not accumulated a grief too poignant for life. Some sorrow they had had, and they had been borne with manly fortitude. Something had whispered in their ears that their parents had done wrong; but of its import they knew nothing. They did not understand what had been the cause of their error, nor did they know why there had been a disturbance between the God of their being and them. They only knew that far back in the by-gone days of their parent's history, something had been done by them, that had not received the sanction of the Great God above. They had some vague recollection of their

mother telling them that there was a time when Sin was not. But of the meaning of the word they had no definite idea. While they were yet young, their mother had imparted to them a tradition of a time when the earth yielded her fruit spontaneously, when the summer winds were cool and refreshing, and there was no winter on the earth! A perennial spring crowned the live-long days with anadems of flowers, and the birds chirped the music of the earth. No winds of icy coldness swept along their pathway to freeze their blood! All was a day of one refreshing sunshine on the face of the earth.

As the brothers, Cain and Abel, played on the banks of young Euphrates, they looked into each other's face and smiled. They had been together from their youth to that present hour, and together they had Lived as brothers. No strifes had been between them—no feuds that had made them enemies. Side by side they had slept on the flowers of the earth, and on each others breasts often had they pillowed their heads! As the sun ascended the skies to the noon of his day, the younger brother reared on the brink of the river, an altar for sacrifice.

"What dost thou !" asked Cain of his brother.

"I am offering in sacrifice a lamb to my God!" replied Abel meekly.

"Why dost thou do it!"

"He has commanded me to do it, brother!"

"What were his reasons?

"I know not brother—but he said I should do it!"

"And thou hast obeyed him?"

"I have!"

"Dost the God which thou worshippest delight in blood!"

"Thou should'st not, my brother, speak thus!"

"Docs the bleeding victim which thou givest in offering, appease his vengeance! Why does he require the shedding of blood !"

"Oh! brother, thou talkest strangely !"

"My words, Abel, are not as strange as thy actions."

"He has commanded me to offer a lamb in sacrifice, and I have obeyed him."

"The innocent lamb which you are about sacrificing to appease the anger of some incensed deity, knows not the cause of the cruelty you will soon inflict on it. But an hour ago it was free to roam on the river's brink, and gambol among the young daises that grow on its banks. It was not less free than the balmy air that floats above our heads."

Abel answered him not! And while the sacrifice was being made, Cain looked strangely on his brother. A change had come over the lineaments of his face—and where gladness had once dwelt in sunshine, dark clouds were now floating. The altar was raised—and the sacrifice was about being made, when Cain, worked up to madness, stealthily came and struck his brother. Abel fell. One quiver of the limbs—and he was dead!

Pale as marble—and rigid were his lineaments. And Cain looked upon death.

The murderer! What were his feelings while gazing on the expiring brother! Nothing had occurred before like it; consequently he was full of strange feelings. He shook the body to see if it would not stir—but it moved not, and it breathed not! He called on the brother, but his brother answered him not! He felt him—and there was a coldness of skin, that was unlike any thing that he had at any time before felt! He had done a deed whose import he did not quite understand! He still called on the name of his brother, but his brother never answered him more!

The sun went down for the first time in his life, covered by dark clouds! The event was ominous! Night came on hurriedly—but the stars, those altar lights of Heaven, were not lit to illuminate her golden halls. The thunder, deep and loud, bellowed, shaking the very mountains! Flames of lurid lightning quivered on the black air—and again all was dark! The tempest raged—but in the breast of Cain there was an undying sting, as deep as the deed that he had committed was dark. On the pale flowers his fevered head lay, sleepless, but dreaming of death! Into the very core of his heart he felt the worm of conscience feeding! The form of his brother, pale and haggard, was visible in the darkness. He shut his eyes, and placed his hands over them to keep out the likeness of his brother, but the spectre would not be kept away! He had committed a crime more awful in magnitude than any other. "Wo is me!" from the very anguish of a

broken spirit,—he cried. He called on death to release him from mortality, but the spectre came not at his bidding. From the high throne of the great Intelligence of Nature, there beamed upon him a frown more withering in its look than the death of Abel—more scowling than the dark tempest that was at strife with the elements of Nature. "Wo is me!" he still cried—and from that hour he fled the scenes of his childhood with a press of grief at his heart —and his foot-prints were never more seen in the white sand of the Euphrates!

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